

WOMEN SCREAM

Shaw Reaction: 'Simply Great!'

By JACK DEMPSEY

"Great! Simply great!"

This brief, simple declaration summed up the feeling of Clay L. Shaw after hearing the verdict of "not guilty" intoned by Minute Clerk George Sullivan early today.

Women, who made up about half the court room audience let out a chorus of shrieking screams. Some began sobbing openly, apparently with joy. Others jumped up and down, hugging each other.

THE DEFENDANT, WHO WAS seated behind a phalanx of five husky deputy criminal sheriffs, suddenly loomed above them as he stood and faced the jury—a big smile lighting up a face which, a few moments earlier, had seemed haggard and tense with concern.

The bailiff and court crier yelled for "order in the court," and repeated the demand several times before the command began to have effect.

This reporter stationed himself about six feet from where the defendant sat and asked him how he felt.

IT SEEMED THE WORDS JUST wouldn't come out . . . a cigarette he was holding had burned down almost to his finger. Finally he said:

"Great, Jack. Simply great!"

For Clay Shaw the 55 minutes the jury deliberated had to be the longest wait of his life.

For 39 days he sat and listened as a parade of wit-

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nesses—both his own and those of the state—took turns in the witness box telling their part of the case, one of the most dramatic in the city's legal history.

He heard the sharp pitched legal battles between his counsel and the hard-hitting prosecutors.

ALWAYS ATTENTIVE TO WHAT was going on, he listened as assistant District Attorney Alvin V. Oser described what he called a triangulation of cross-fire at Dealey Plaza and his "three men and three guns" theory.

He heard Asst. DA James L. Alcock, the tenacious one who ramrodded the state's case and served as its chief prosecutor, summing things up in the state's rebuttal, asserting: "coincidences suddenly become real hard facts!"

And finally he heard Jim Garrison, the district attorney himself and the architect of the state's case against the Warren Commission report and Clay Shaw, as he called the government's handling of the president's assassination "the greatest fraud in the history of our country!"

NOW IT WAS ALL OVER—THE courtroom oratory, the legal battles, the parade of witnesses, expert and oftentimes inexpert, the movies, the charts and everything else was now a part of history.

Shaw knew the moment of decision was close when

Judge Edward A. Haggerty Jr. began his charge to the jury. He listened attentively as Judge Haggerty read the law regarding conspiracy, expert witness testimony, and the responsive verdicts which could be returned.

Judge Haggerty completed the reading—looked up at the clock and noted the hour—one minute past midnight.

Ironically it was now two years to the day since Clay Shaw had been arrested and booked with conspiring with Lee Harvey Oswald, David W. Ferrie "and others" to murder the president of the United States.

THE JUDGE INSTRUCTED THE jurors on the mechanics of their deliberation. As they were filing out of the courtroom to go upstairs to weigh the fate of Shaw he discharged the two alternate jurors.

The two alternates, John J. Beilman Jr. and Robert J. Burlet, appeared elated, particularly when Judge Haggerty presented them with gilt-edged certificates from the New Orleans Bar Association and himself and added "I'm going to get you and the other jurors excused from further jury duty for the rest of your lives!"

At this point Clay Shaw may have gotten a tip or preview of what was yet to come.

After being discharged both jurors walked over to the defense counsel table, shook hands with Shaw and his attorneys and walked hurriedly out of court.

PERHAPS IT WAS MERELY AN oversight, but they walked directly past the prosecution table without notice.

As they hurried out, a reporter asked:

"How would you have voted had you been selected as final jurors?"

They were tight-lipped. Noncommittal. Perhaps it was because they were still within the court room proper.

One of them did say:

"MY MIND WAS MADE UP," and he smiled broadly, adding "but at this point I'd rather not say in which direction."

After the jurors retired to deliberate, Judge Haggerty withdrew to his chambers, where he met with a few friends. His wife, Yolande, who had been outside in the courtroom, joined him.

Judge Haggerty had a few special requests.

"Please mention in your story a little plug for the movie projectionist, Mr. Gerald Kennedy of Waveland, Miss., who showed movies each night for the jurors. I understand he showed them a double feature one weekend.

"AND PLEASE MENTION, NOW THAT it's all over, that Mrs. Josie Elms and her children were responsible for supplying the jurors with a place to view the parade."

Judge Haggerty also proved to be clairvoyant. Lawyers both for the state and the defense were guessing about the time the jury would take to deliberate.

"I'll predict they'll be back in an hour with a verdict," said the judge. "And they'll make Mr. Hebert their foreman."

Sidney Hebert signed the verdict as foreman.

MEANWHILE OUT IN THE COURT ROOM guesses were also being made, both as to the time, and as to the expected results.

What began as a series of murmurs had grown quickly into a loud buzzing noise. It sounded like a horde of bees.

Clay Shaw contributed to the buzzing noise as he got up and walked around the counsel table, chain smoking, and humming. A reporter tried to catch the "tune" but

realized it was simply nervous humming with no particular melody or tune attached.

Shaw chatted with reporters. He also sat for a long time chatting with a cousin from Baton Rouge, pretty Miss Suzanne Day; a cousin from Hammond, Mrs. Tulip Atkins, and Mrs. Jack Cristina, also from Baton Rouge.

"I LIVE WITH MR. SHAW'S mother in Hammond," volunteered Mrs. Atkins.

The three have been in almost constant attendance at the trial, lending encouragement.

A woman with a heart condition suffered a minor weak spell and had to leave the courtroom.

She and the person who accompanied her departed rather reluctantly—and were among only a few who left.

Everyone else seemed to have stayed on. Wives of attorneys—Mrs. Liz Garrison, Mrs. Alvin Oser and others—all remained in court to be on hand for the jury's verdict.

CRIMINAL SHERIFF LOUIS A. Heyd and his chief assistant, Warden A. J. Falkenstein, were also in evidence.

Sheriff Heyd explained that extra security measures were being set up as a precaution, no matter what the verdict might be.

"We're not taking any chances," he said. "We don't know what might happen. Right now I think we can account for just about everybody here in court, but we still don't want to take any chances."

He summoned four additional deputies to join the four already assigned as security guards to the defendant.

THE TENSION BEGAN MOUNTING and one could feel it. Eyes smarted and burned from the cigarette and cigar smoke.

Artists feverishly sketched principals of the drama for presentation in newspapers, magazines and on TV.

It may have been a prank, or perhaps a misunderstood word—but the buzzing at one point calmed down and some persons scurried to their seats as word came at 12:40 a. m. that the jury had reached its verdict.

It proved to be a false alarm, however, and the buzzing conversation grew louder again as small groups of persons gathered to swap opinions.

GARRISON WAS ABSENT. After making his plea to the jurors echoing the late president's admonition to his countrymen, "I suggest it is not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country," Garrison left the courtroom.

His assistants stayed on, however. Oser, Alcock, William Alford and Andrew "Moo Moo" Sciambra chatted quietly among themselves or with friends.

Dymond, who had given the closing argument to the jury, appeared unusually tense.

DYMOND HAD USED COLORFUL language in his final argument, saying at one point, "I hate to beat on a dead dog," when referring to the controversy which waged over Perry Raymond Russo's "statements" to Assistant DA

Sciambra.

He referred to one of the state's witnesses as a "poor little paranoid man." He reviewed the man's testimony "about people constantly hypnotizing him, making him lose his sexual potency."

He questioned the state's "good faith" in presenting such a witness, saying:

"How can the state try to con you gentlemen into accepting such testimony?"

"MY GOD, GENTLEMEN, THIS is a court of law and justice. This kind of testimony is incomprehensible!"

Attacking the "Clay Bertrand" angles of the case, he suggested it would be the act of a complete lunatic for a man to go to the airline's VIP room merely for the purpose of signing his name as "Clay Bertrand."

At one point he suggested that if Shaw had done some of the things the prosecutors accused him of he should be sent "not to Angola but to Jackson!" (Jackson is the site of the East Louisiana State Hospital.)

HE REMINDED THE JURORS THE Warren Commission report was not on trial and lashed out at the state for attempting to use Shaw as a "patsy" to discredit the Warren Commission report.

The hands on the courtroom clock indicated it was now 1 a. m. Again word leaked out that the jury was ready with its verdict.

This was confirmed when Judge Haggerty took the bench and called for order.

THE JURORS FILED INTO THE BOX, handed their written verdict to clerk Sullivan, who in turn handed it to the judge. The judge examined it and asked Sullivan to announce it to the court room.

He did: "We the jury find the defendant Clay L. Shaw not guilty."